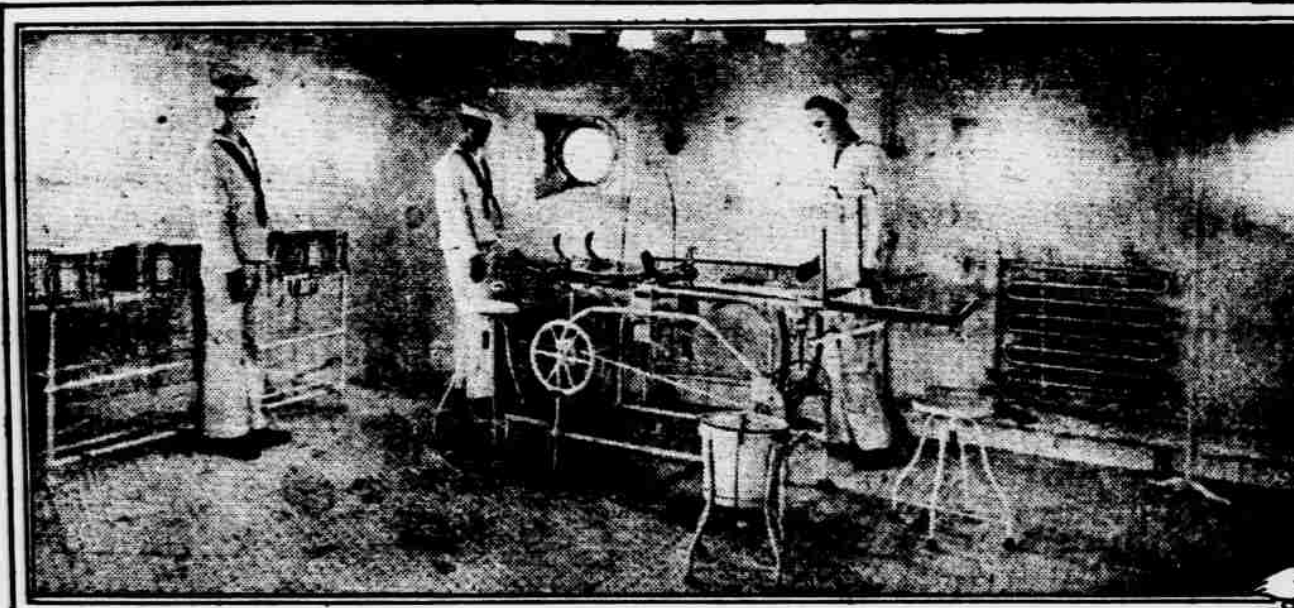


Navy's New Hospital Ship, the Comfort, Bears Out Her Name in Every Way



OPERATING ROOM
(MAIN)

Vessel, One of Several, Complete Floating Sanitarium, With Every Essential Medical and Surgical Appliance in Place

NO beehive of war work in the land is busier, per square or cubic foot, than the New York Navy Yard. Of that ordered and disciplined welter of night and day strenuities, the part which a civilian visitor, even with the highest credentials, is permitted to see and describe is very small. The authorities prefer that the enemy should learn for himself by bitter experience what the American navy has in store for him.

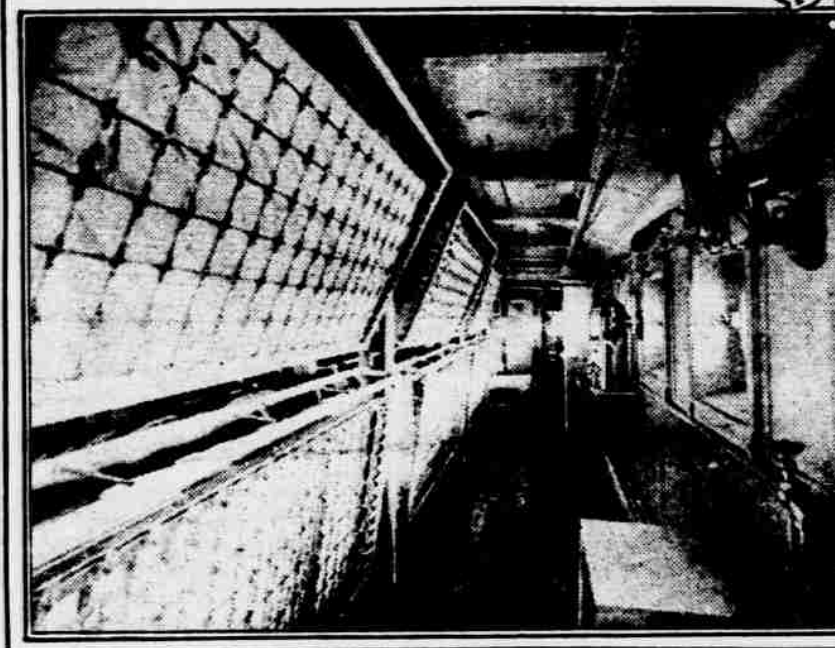
Qualified exception is made of the naval hospital ships, one of which, the Comfort, is about to be placed in commission. She will follow the Mercy, her sister ship, like her in every detail. Seven months ago they were Ward liners, the Havana and the Saratoga. To-day, "converted" stem to stern and topside to garboard strake, they are ready for their attendance upon the American naval forces in the war zone.

Except that they are not, as the hospital ships to follow them will have been, originally designed for such service, they represent the last word of naval and medical science on the subject of hospital care for men at sea. Ever since the Spanish war our naval floating hospitals have been the models. In the navies of our allies and of our enemies such ships are considered primarily transports for sick and wounded, and equipment ends with provision for the handling of the patient until he can be landed at a base. In our own navy a hospital ship is a hospital complete; she can, if need be, take care of every sort of case, medical and surgical, from the time when the patient is received on board to his discharge as cured.

Eager for Home Folks to Know. That is what the Government is willing and even eager that home folks with boys in the navy should fully understand.

As she lies in the yard, the Comfort still proclaims her former role, but with superstructural changes, and with a new dress of paint as garish and fantastic as a harlequin's. Her hull is snowy white. Dividing this whiteness the length of the ship runs a bold, broad stripe of a challenging olive green. The purpose is not camouflage. On the contrary, it is conspicuousness, as prescribed for hospital ships by the international conventions. The Hun was a subscriber to those conventions. In practice, he observes them as he does the others. He expects enemy guns and torpedoes to spare his hospital ship, should one venture out, but retains the Gott given privilege of spurios verisimilitude in the enemy's hospitals as fast as they come within range. Or if he does not, he now has some fifteen fatal mistakes to his discredit.

The Comfort's listed tonnage is 10,000. Her normal capacity in patients is 312. You may count that number of beds in the various wards. Under emergency, as for instance after a fleet action, gathering the wounded to ferry them to land, she can, with cots, accommodate four to



MAIN WARD

five hundred more. Meanwhile, her role is a continuous cruising round, from naval base to naval base, and between the bases and the fleet. On this business a hospital ship is supposed to be exempt. Although her equipment as a hospital is as nearly complete as professional forethought and public and charitable financial provision can make it—the Colonial Dames gave \$50,000 to equip the main operating rooms of the Comfort and the Mercy, and when this had been done enough money remained to equip their specialized auxiliary operating rooms—no ship at sea is the ideal theatre for a major operation. Her motion handicaps the surgeon's skill. When possible serious cases will be hurried to land or to the quiet of a harbor anchorage. But cases which cannot wait can be operated upon with all the facilities anywhere available, and through centuries of naval warfare surgical science has done marvels in spite of any roll of the ship from almost any storm.

Carries Two Ambulance Boats.

The Comfort carries two ambulances, big, broad beamed motor launches, each capable of bringing in eight or ten prostrated patients at a trip. The device used in lowering such a patient over the side from a warship's deck and in lifting him to the Comfort's is a stout wire stretcher basket, the Stokes stretcher. It looks, with its conformation to the outline of the body, and its bifurcation for the legs, like half of an openwork mummy case. The patient is strapped into it and lowered or lifted as a lifeboat is, by a crane and pulleys and tackle, hanging absolutely horizontal in his journey through the air.

Once aboard the Comfort, he is received, classified and assigned to ward and bed exactly as he would be in a hospital on land. The spacious, steady elevator that carries the travelling stretcher and the attendants to the proper deck is just the same as land hospital patients know.

The main operating room is forward, on the promenade deck, day lighted from three sides, artificially lighted as usual by a cluster of powerful tungstens overhead. Its dazzling whiteness, its scrubable rounded corners, its stark and simple roominess, varied only by the flash and glitter of the sterilizing machines and the wall cases of apparatus, are everything a surgeon's heart could wish. Delicate apparatus, by the way, is a problem on a ship at sea. Every small and fragile thing that must be always at hand is so

cured against breakage by clips. Other things, and spare stores, are wrapped and tucked away in drawers and lockers. The dentist's room, for example, is fairly a-bristle with vials and trays and whatnot—no fashionable practitioner uptown in Manhattan has anything on the Comfort's dentist and dental surgeon in point of apparatus—but each knickknack has its place, out of which the choppiest sea of the Channel, should the Comfort go there, could not shake it.

The orthopedic surgeon, whose business is mending bones and joints, has an operating room to himself, with the latest approved special table for fractures, and the racklike engines of mercy that stretch a shattered limb while the cast is fixing the bones in their places.

Convenient to this and to the main operating room are a store room for instruments and dressings, a sterilizing room, and a scrubbing room for the doctors, where the hot water is turned on by pressure of the doctor's knee on a convenient lever, so that his sacred sterile hands need touch nothing to be defiled.

Eye and ear and nose and throat cases are provided for with a staff specialist, who has "office" and equipment for his work. A small operating room for major surgery bears on its door the grisly name, "Pus Operating Room." Here what surgeons technically classify as "dirty" cases will be treated, lest in spite of all the aseptic precautions infection should spread.

Laboratory Complete in Every Way.

There is a completely appointed pathological laboratory, for which \$800 worth of sera, vaccines and cultures were donated by the Board of Health. Bacteriological study involves the inoculation of animals, and when you are taken up topside, under the sky, you are shown a small village of hutchies and runs populous with guinea pigs.

X-ray work—doubly important in war hospitals—has a room and an expert of its own. For cases in the wards which cannot be brought to the big stationary radiography machine a travelling bedside machine is ready on call. The prescription room, with its pharmacists, is the usual hospital feature; the routine with a prescription is the same. In fact, throughout the Comfort the best tribute that can be paid is simply to say that no feature of an up to date land hospital can be thought of which lacks its counterpart on board this ship.

The wards are fully specialized. Five



MEDICAL INSPECTOR
C. M. OMAN.

PHOTOS BY A SUN STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER.

are isolation wards, dedicated to different kinds of contagion, each with its lavatory and sanitary facilities adjoining it, so that a patient ready for discharge can be bathed and scrubbed right there, before he is turned out among the other convalescents.

Sick officers have a small ward to themselves. It is not better appointed than the general wards for the men. All the larger wards have beds double decked in tiers. The white frame and springs are in one, a cot sized basket tray, so built that it can be folded up out of the way like a Pullman upper berth when not in use. All quarters for patients are above the water line, and most of them are above the main deck.

Sun Parlor a Fine Feature.

The solarium or sun parlor provided for convalescents is one of the finest features of the ship. Here, if nowhere else, a ship hospital has natural advantages over a building on land, and of those advantages the most was made in the enclosure of at least a quarter of the promenade deck, aft, with a belt of windows running all around it. Bier wicker lounge chairs, steamer chairs and tables are the furnishings. The deck space this sun parlor occupies must be the same where carefree passengers sunned themselves and watched the shuffleboard tournaments in the days when the Comfort was the liner Havana and her stem used to trouble the flying fish that haunt the Gulf Stream.

The doctors and surgeons of the staff, from Capt. Oman down, are almost boyishly proud of the perfection of their floating hospital. They show you the linen rooms and other stores, stocked for an indefinite time of continuous service at sea, the diet kitchens, the general galley—as neat as any diet kitchen would have to be—the laundry with its battery of the most improved machines, which leaves little but starching to be done by hand, the great clothes chute that feeds it through the decks and looks at any way station like a sizable young furnace with feed door wide enough for the shovel of a giant stoker, the refrigerating plant and accessory larder rooms and last of all, as an afterthought, their own comfortable and businesslike home quarters.



SURGEON R. A. WARNER

In the line of food supplies they all rejoice over the Comfort's mascot, which is a "mechanical cow." Bossy looks like a truncated cone, harnessed and garnished with pipes, gauges and spigots. The beauty of this gentle creature is that for the first time in nautical annals she insures the ship a constant supply of excellent fresh milk, independent of cold storage.

The milk is synthetic, but you would not know that. Bossy devours milk powder, butter fat, and drinks sterilized water as requisite. What she yields is milk, no less, in any desired quantity. Prosaic makers of machinery would call her an emulいた. To the Comfort she's the cow; whether or not her white capped and robed attendant is the dairymaid the visitors did not learn. The importance of milk in sick diet needs no explaining.

The staff has a medical library room, which seems to have been about three first cabin staterooms before the naval constructors took the Havana in hand. Balancing the library in the deck plan is a sort of small saloon (ship sense of the word, of course) for convalescent sick officers. This haven offers books, cards and board games (the chaplain was said to have provided the cards, but that was not officially confirmed; there seemed to be about 500 packs), a phonograph or two with no end of records and a piano.

Has Music in Plenty Aboard.

Speaking of musical instruments; it occurred to THE SUN man that even after the generous gift of the Colonial Dames the Comfort might be in want of some small addition or other to her equipment, and that seasonable mention of the fact in print might possibly get results. He suggested it to Capt. Oman.

"No, for goodness sake!" said that busy executive cordially. "We had everything but books and pianos and phonographs, and we've had enough of those offered to sink the ship. It's been splendid, only we can't use any more."

"What we do want, though," he added, "are subscriptions to newspapers and magazines. Can't have too many of those. Old magazines aren't good enough. The man in the navy nowadays keeps up in his reading pretty well, and he doesn't



OFFICERS' WARD

want old 'gear' of any kind. Current reading matter is always good, in a hospital especially."

Under Capt.—professionally Dr. C. M. Oman and in navy rank Medical Director, and Dr. L. A. Warner, the executive surgeon, both regular navy men, the heads of the staff are members of the Brooklyn Naval Station Hospital unit assigned by Washington for duty on the ship. They are Lieutenant-Commander J. A. Lee, head of the surgical department; Dr. J. J. Collins, head of the medical department; Dr. E. J. Morris, X-ray department; Dr. William Moitrier, Jr., pathologist. Dr. J. G. Wood is the eye, ear, nose and throat specialist. With these there is a complement of assistants.

No Women Nurses Carried.

As originally planned the Comfort was to have carried women nurses. A change of plans and assignments took place. Ninety male nurses, trained men of a hospital corps, will be on board when she puts to sea. Her navigating officers, of the naval auxiliary service, are, as the hospital is, under Capt. Oman's command. The total complement is 325. Tests have shown that the order "Abandon ship" could be executed, patients and all, in something like twelve minutes.

One feature which the medical men aboard thought the public would be glad to know of is the complete screening of the ship against mosquitoes and flies.

Everybody unfortunate enough to have known hospital life from the inside must have wondered how so appalling a quantity of laundering is done. The laundry of the Comfort may be no different from any other hospital's, but to a lay visitor its machinery is a revelation. Soiled pieces having plumped down the clothes chute, go first into the maw of a horizontal cylindrical boiler, within which they are rotated in a perforated drum while steaming and sloshing in hot water. There is no wringer to chew them. The first stage of the drying takes place in another cylinder revolved at such speed that the wringing is accomplished by centrifugal force. A steam heated chamber completes the drying process.

"We don't hang clothes out—not much—on a ship like this," said the blue-jacket in charge of the laundry room with a grin, to a fool question. The ironer for large flat work is an affair of heavy hot rollers. For white uniforms, shirt bosoms and the like a clamping machine on the letter press principle serves; a

small hot roller of shining steel irons the collars and cuffs.

The mortuary of the Comfort is not to be dwelt upon unduly, but people will be glad to know it exists. Uncle Sam's navy, almost alone among military services, brings home its dead from overseas.

The deck plan conversion of the liner—the Havana and Saratoga were bought by the Government a little more than six months ago—shows up in every detail of her superstructure. The officers' quarters, the wardroom, the bear's dimension of the smaller operating rooms and the storerooms in the outside tiers and some of the old panelling along the main passageways represent all that remains of the old arrangement. Everything else has been cleared and gerrymandered with new bulkheads. All the operating rooms and storerooms and all the ward space have been specially caulked and caulked. The work has been and is still being carried on twenty-four hours of the day. The Comfort will be ready for service as soon as is humanly possible, and she looks as if the time would now be short.

Wanted Ship Seen at Her Best.

She seemed very smart and spruce to a civilian, even though she was coaling the day THE SUN men went over her. But her officers were horrified at the thought of her being photographed in soiling negligence and without a brisk tidying up of the operating rooms and the other show places—they already looked tidy enough to meet the views of the most fastidious New England housekeeper; still, a good navy man has his pride in the grooming of his ship.

She was practically stored, with the stores all disposed in order, except for a little minor arrangement that could be done at sea. It happened to be midday meal time when the commandant of the yard had passed on the credentials of the visitors, and his aid had conducted them through a mile or so of the grimy industrial labyrinth that is the yard while the nation is at war. (You would hardly get lost in it, left to yourself, because you would infallibly be arrested before your explorations had taken you fifty feet.) The galley of the Comfort was busy. Something resembling fishballs was being compounded with paddles in galvanized tubs.

Perhaps the reader remembers the dear old lady, some dignitary's wife or other, who was shown over a warship, peeped

SOLARIUM

Normal Capacity in Wards Is 312, but in Any Emergency Craft May Carry Almost 1,000 Without Trouble

into the galley at the same stage of the cuisine and put up her lorgnette at the tubs and the paddles with "Mercy me! Is that food?"

The ward room claimed the Fourth Estate for luncheon. If chowder is always so good throughout the service, poor Fritz, who must have to do his fighting on a synthetic substitute erswurst by this time, will be under a direful handicap when he finally comes out of the Kiel Canal. The wardroom oafs are Filipinos, particularly bright and alert, moving about the table with the impassive shadow silence of good Oriental servants everywhere. One or two exceptions as to race were inkiest Ethiopian.

Across the basin from the Comfort lay a brand new *Goa* warrior. Further than this what she was must not be said. Time was when people thought our Indiana class of battleships monsters in their line. The new monster would have made your Indianas, judging by the linear dimensions of the Comfort, which is 12,000 tons, and making due allowance, weight for bulk.

Absolutely Vital to the Service.

And yet upon the warriors, great and small, the Comfort and Mercy and their predecessors, the Solace and the Relief, will attend in the indispensable capacity of the healer. Without them the naval personnel abroad for months or years would have a bad time of it from the ordinary ailments in the course of life, at sea. And without them the suffering after a great fleet engagement would be infinitely worse than it ever can be with their ministrations.

The routine of a ship like the Comfort would include a round of attendance upon all the naval bases used by American warships. Wireless keeps her constantly at the orders of the department; if an epidemic or an accident or the fire of an enemy results in many hospital cases aboard a warship at sea, the floating hospital goes to the stricken vessel or awaits her or keeps rendezvous with her, as circumstances make advisable. If the great engagement—that great engagement for which the British and American navies are praying to Neptune—ever comes off the hospital ship will probably take off wounded from all the damaged fighting ships in turn.

The point of this is, for the home folks, that if your young man is abroad with the navy and if he tops a piece of a shell or falls down a hatch or breaks his finger in an ammunition hoist, or if he gets pneumonia or scarlet fever or mumps or measles or a sort throat, or if his eyes go bad or a tooth ulcerates, you won't have to worry 'for fear he is not getting as good care as is favorable surroundings as the best of your home town hospitals could give him.

The Comfort has rather a comfy name—there are those who think the naming committee might have done a better job, but so far as your peace of mind is concerned, she ought to be comforted.